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**THE DEVELOPMENT OF LEFT HAND
PIANOFORTE TECHNIQUE**

BY

DORIS EDNA HESS

THESIS

FOR THE

DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF MUSIC

IN

MUSIC

SCHOOL OF MUSIC

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

1921

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.....June 13,.....1921.....

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY SUPERVISION BY

.....DORIS EDNA HESS.....

ENTITLEDTHE DEVELOPMENT OF LEFT HAND PIANOFORTE TECHNIQUE.....

IS APPROVED BY ME AS FULFILLING THIS PART OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE

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.....George F. Schwartz.....

Instructor in Charge

APPROVED:.....

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At Sunset

Mozart	-	Fantasie in C-minor
Rachmaninoff	-	Prelude in C# minor
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Saint-Saens	-	Priere, op. 7, No.3
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DEVELOPMENT OF LEFT HAND PIANOFORTE TECHNIQUE

Philip Emmanuel Bach, son of John Sebastian Bach was the first to use the monophonic style of writing. The use of all five fingers was the result of the development of monophonic playing. In using all five fingers, the hand could indulge in much greater freedom of execution, not being hampered by the necessity of playing two or more voices. He developed the sonata form in the direction of clearness and symmetry: he adopted the principle of contrast in key as well as in character, in the three movements of which his sonatas were composed: in short, he established the plan of the sonata, determined the direction in which it was to develop, and by his influence and example, gave the most powerful stimulus to that development. The most important service rendered by Emmanuel Bach, Haydn, and Mozart was their progressive recognition of the "Lyric" element.

The influence of fundamental basses is only slightly inferior to that of the chief melody, and is equal if not superior, to that of secondary melody or counterpoints. On account of their inferior penetrating power, compared to treble notes, fundamental basses can bear a slight excess of power, without fear of overshadowing melodic notes in a higher register. The additional emphasis given to fundamental basses would also be justified on account of grammatical and quantitative principles.

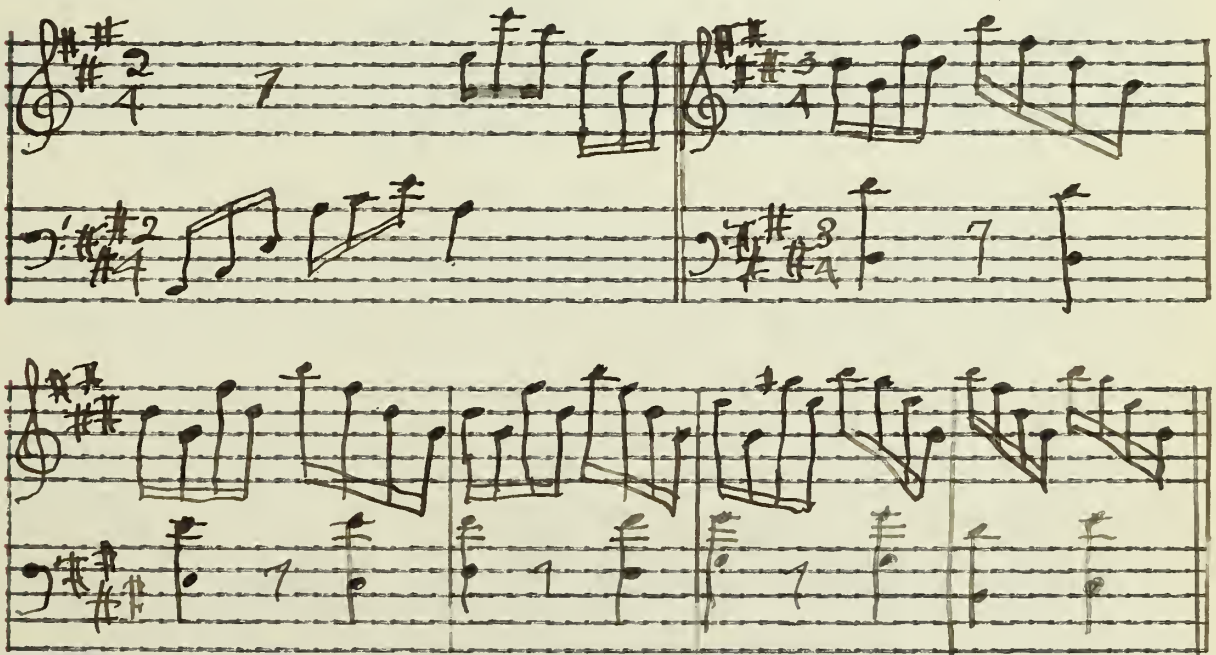
Fundamental basses must, naturally, either remain stationary, or move. The former we call "organ points," the

latter "progressive basses." Progressive basses generally constitute melodic phrases, and these should receive the prominence which is due to melodies.

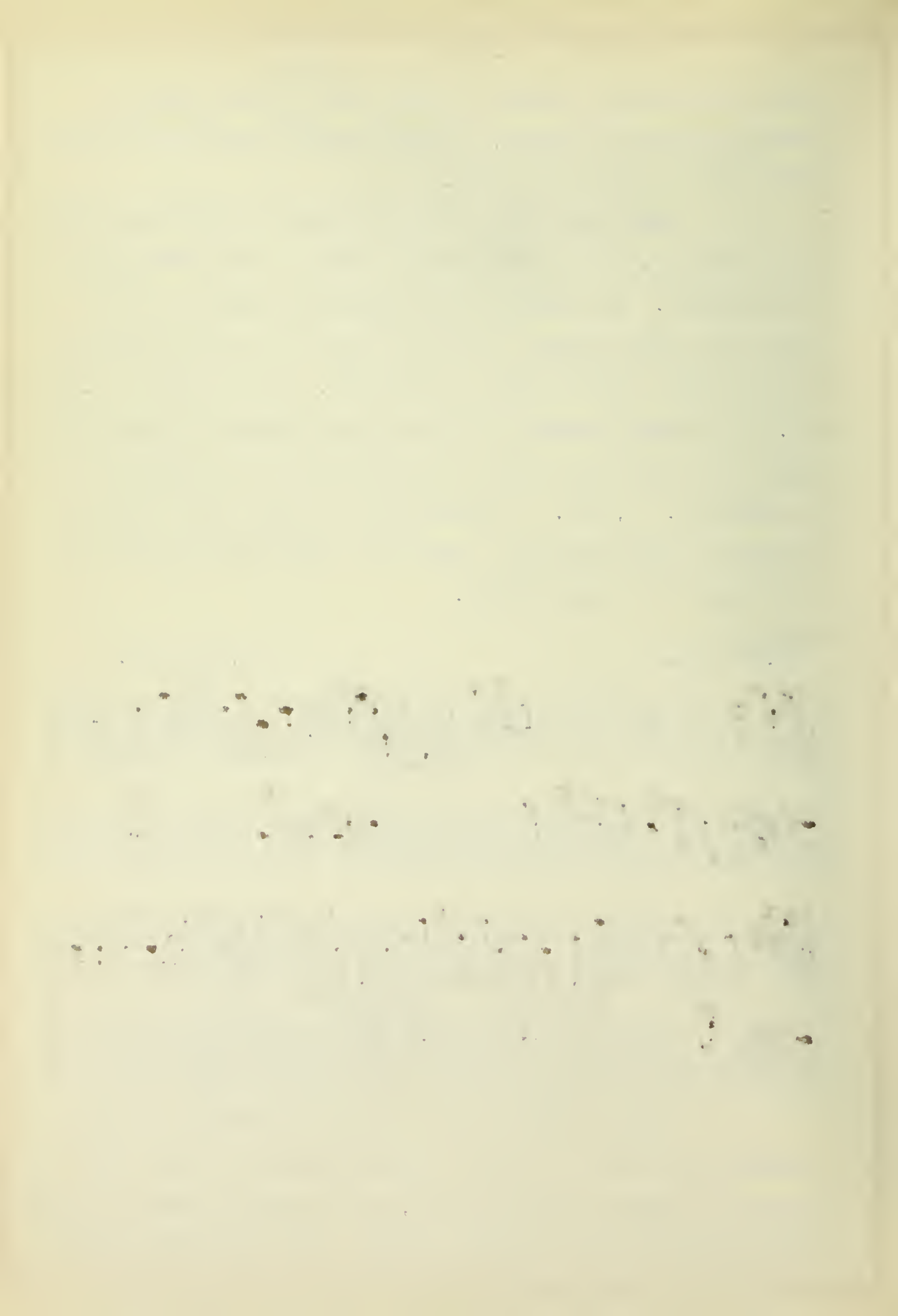
Haydn made very little progress in developing left hand technique. He accepted Bach's sonata - form, enlarging its movements. The sonatas are interesting because of the place they occupy between the Bach school on the one hand and the developed classic school on the other. In his Sonata op.26, Vol. 3, he merely breaks up the tonic and dominant chords into arpeggios in the left hand, as illustrated in the example 1. In Sonata op. 17, Vol. 2, the left hand carries the melody in octaves for twelve measures, while the right hand has the embellishments or accompaniment.

Example 1:
op.26, Vol.3

op. 17, Vol.2



The new "pianoforte," which was becoming popular because of its fuller and more subtly expressive tones, was precisely adapted to Mozart's aim, and he was the first to launch the pianoforte on its decisive career. New feats were demanded



of him: he had to work on bold lines; he had to bring into use the special features of the instrument he adopted: the rippling scale-passage, the variety of tone, the forte, the pianissimo. The endless melody and free intelligence of his music took all the sharpness from the sonata form and brought it into more typical shape. Mozart developed the left hand in the sonatas to a very small extent. In his "Fantasie in C-Minor" we have the left hand carrying the melody, and playing arpeggios a flexible hand is necessary to play this composition, as there is the melody to be brought out in the left hand.

"Fantasie in C-Minor"-

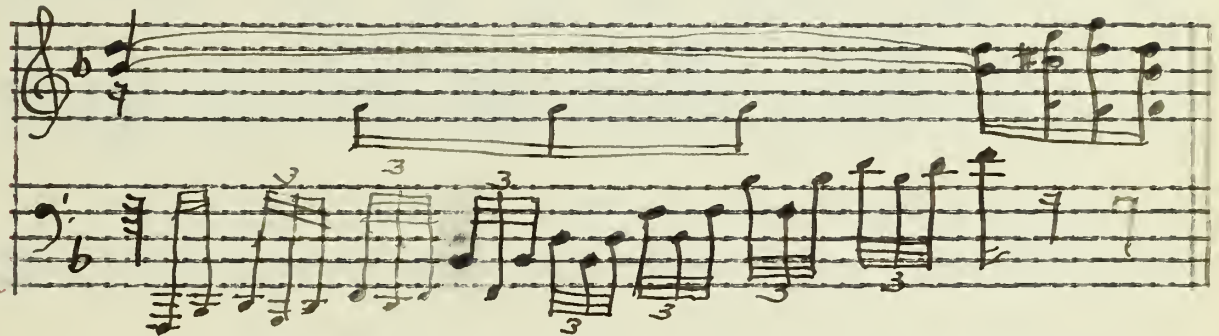


Beethoven (1770-1827) marks the beginning of a new school. He stood between the apparently warring elements of classicism and romanticism and bravely battled for both, conserving the old, but regenerating it and adapting it to the new régime. Beethoven had remarkable skill, not only in developing large and beautiful ideas out of apparently insignificant, but really pregnant "motivi"; but also in writing beautiful basses. The theme of the Variations which make up the finale of the "Eroica" Symphony is also the theme for a set of Variations for the pianoforte. In the pianoforte variations as in the symphonic, Beethoven begins with the bass and introduces the

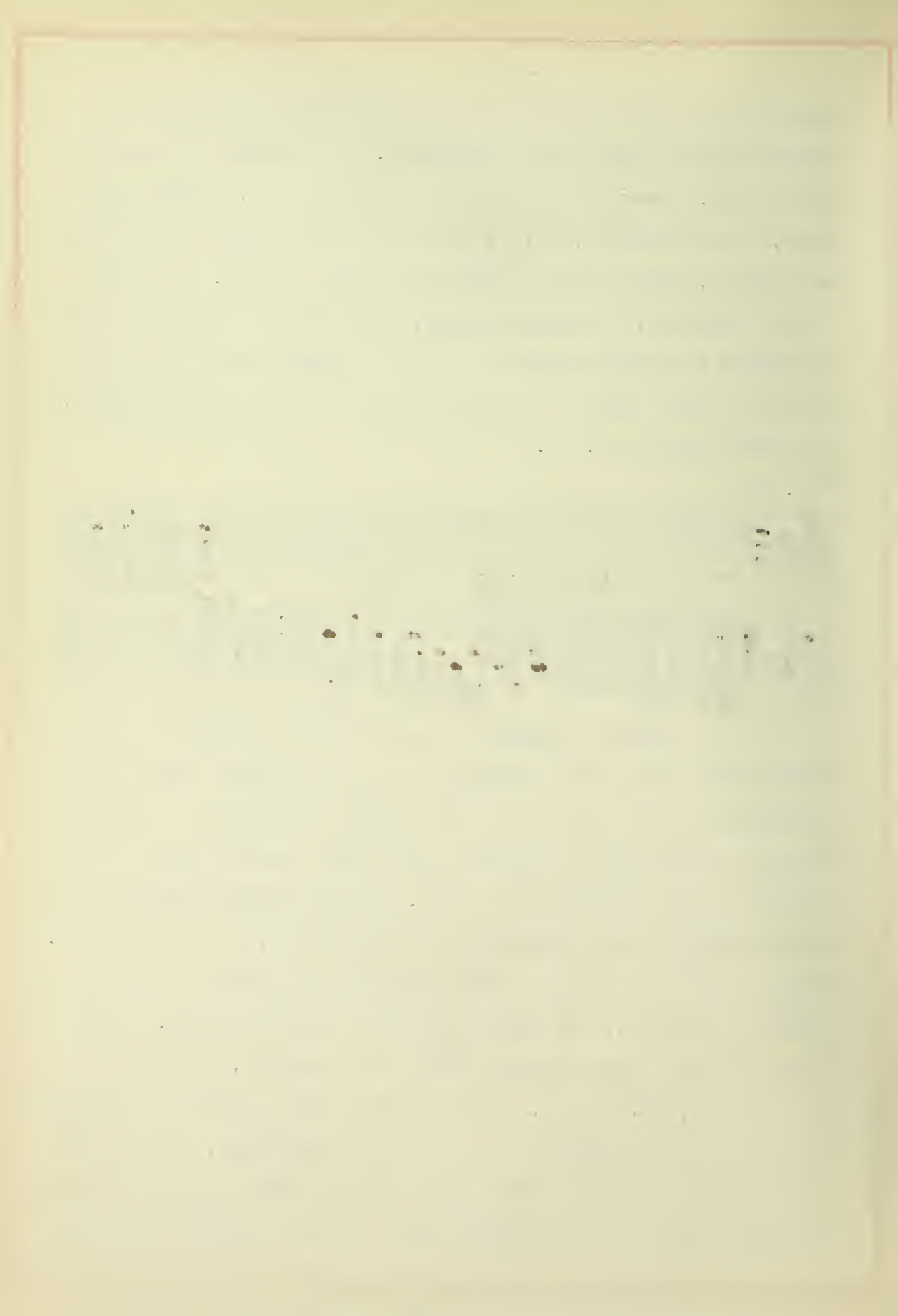


melody as a counterpoint upon it; thereafter it remains the theme with the bass as an "ostinato". "A musician is known by his basses," might well be set down as an axiom. Rubenstein says, "In the Sonata, op. 7, the bass of the Largo alone is, in my opinion, worth twice as much as a whole sonata." In the sixth variation, the adagio molto, the melody is carried in the left hand for eight measures, then is transferred to the right hand with very complex variations in the left, as illustrated. Six Variations - op. 34.

Var. VI



Another interesting study in the development of Beethoven's left hand technique is in his fifteen "Variations with Fugue on the theme from the 'Eroica' Symphony." To begin with, he introduces the theme in the bass; next he has a duet with the bass carrying the melody. The fifteenth variation is more complex, more developed in the left hand, than the others. There are many difficult scale passages, passages in thirds, trills, arpeggios, and broken-chords in the left hand. Here Beethoven has some exacting left hand technique, as shown by measures 27, 28, 29, 30. The "Eroica" theme has more technique in the left hand than any of the other variations. In all his Variations, Beethoven makes the left hand freer, more developed, than any of his contemporaries. In his Sonatas, especially



the "Largo" of op.7, he has a wonderful bass. In many places it plays the melody parallel to the right hand, or it has the melody while the right hand has a counterpoint. Beethoven's octaves are, full of grandeur and so appropriate to the theme, coming in at just the right time. We have the melody in the bass brought out beautifully, beginning with measure 74, as illustrated:

Largo of Sonata, op. 7, Beginning Measure 74

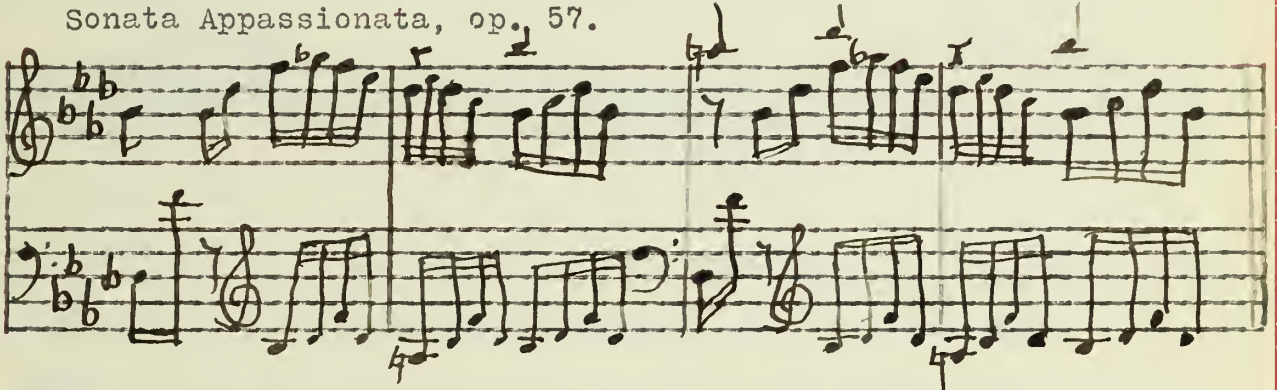


1870

1871

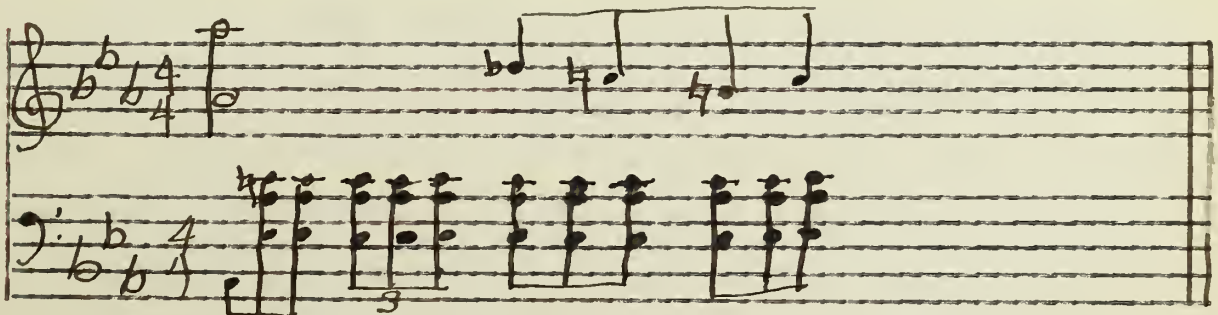
The bass requires the greatest dynamic power when the progression of the basses represents an independent motive; as, for example:

Sonata Appassionata, op. 57.

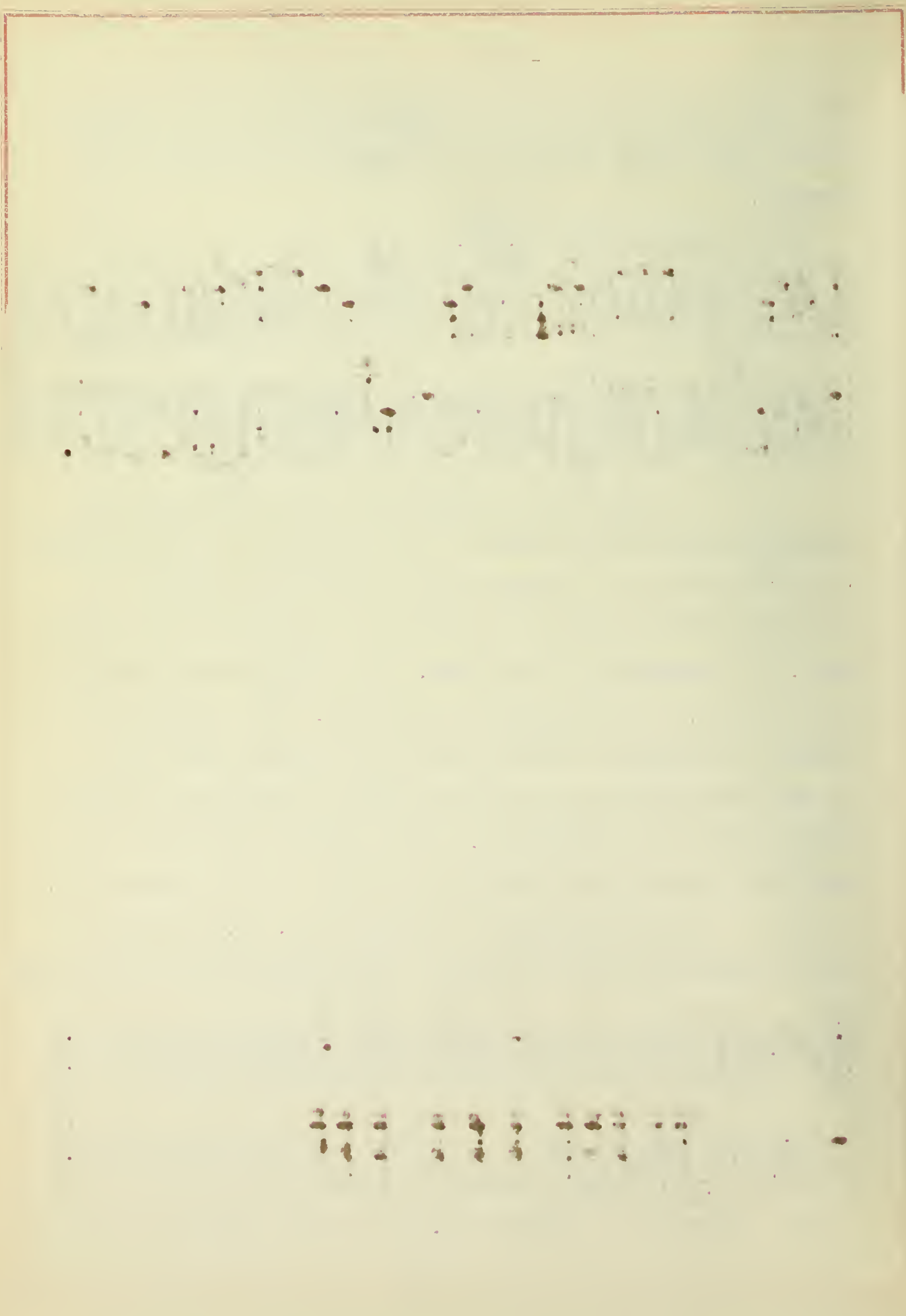


Beginning with Schubert, we find these principle elements introduced into music: (1) Freedom in the treatment of structural forms i.e. freedom which contracts or expands or otherwise modifies forms to adapt them to their spiritual content. (2) Invention of new forms. (3) Extension of the harmonic scheme. (4) Freedom in modulation. (5) Increase in number and variety of rhythms from which element comes life in the sense of movement as illustrated in the peculiarly propulsive effect of syncopation. (6) Adoption of poetical conceits as underlying and determining factors of the composition.

In his "Impromptu in C-Minor" op. 90, he introduces triplets in the bass against four eighths in the right hand.



In his "Impromptu in F-Minor" op. 142, he uses parallel passages and chromatics in left hand, he takes more liberties with rhythm;



his composition are more technical, more developed in the left hand, also more "lyric" in content.



His "Moment Musical" No.1 in C is interesting in that the melody is carried in the bass beginning with measure 17. Beginning with measure 14 he uses parallel passages with complex rhythm.



Schubert's "Fantasie in C", op. 15, has a very pretentious left hand technique. There are chromatic, scale passages of some length, double passages which call for very clear, yet heavy touch, much modulation, octave bravuras, broken chords, trills in the left hand, broken octaves. This gives the left hand a fine chance to display its technique. Schubert is one of the first to pay so much attention to the left hand. It is much more pretentious than Mozart's "Fantasie", shows more knowledge of the left hand, more forethought in composing the left hand melody. In the Allegro of the Fantasie the left hand carries the melody for nine measures in octaves, the right hand starts the melody a fifth higher and plays it in octaves while the left hand carries a counter point or melody. The left hand of his

1. The first part of the paper is devoted to a general
discussion of the problem. It is shown that the
problem is of great importance in the theory of
the differential equations of the second order.

2. In the second part of the paper the author
presents a detailed analysis of the problem. It is
shown that the problem is of great importance in
the theory of the differential equations of the second
order.

fantasie rondos remind one very much of the exercises of Czerny for left hand, because of his (Schubert's) use of double passages scale passage, broken chords, octave bravuras, etc.

Chopin (1810-1849) stands alone in musical history. Like many virtuosi composers who preceded him, Chopin wrote almost exclusively for pianoforte. His waltzes are salon music of an aristocratic kind. The left hand is usually hard to play because the melody usually depends upon the tones or chords of the left hand. Each tone must be accurate or it unbalances the melody. His Valse Brillante in A-minor, op. 34, No.2, begins with the melody in the bass, for 16 measures.

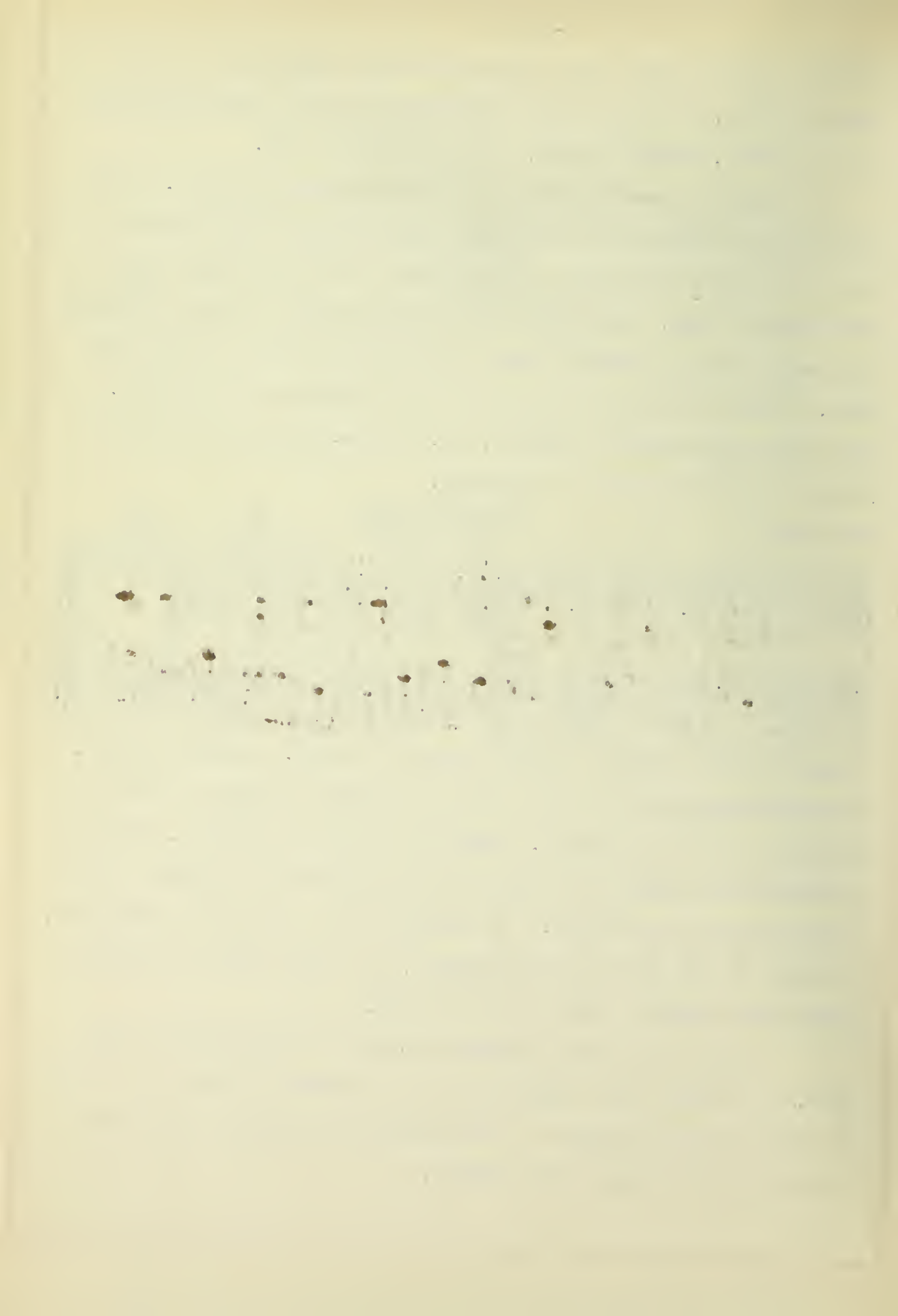
Measure 1

Third Movement
Measure 13

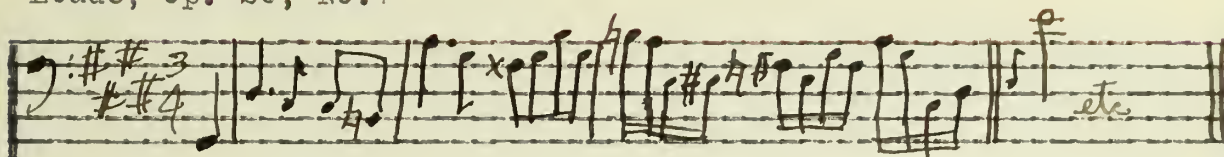


Chopin's music depends largely upon his basses. In his waltzes, the player must get the bass notes correctly in order to get the harmony of the composition. Unlike the earlier waltzes, Chopin's have much development of left hand in modulation; harmonic structure is also more complex. His basses have a space by themselves, and are not merely for accompaniment, but are richer in harmony; also they require a very accurate touch.

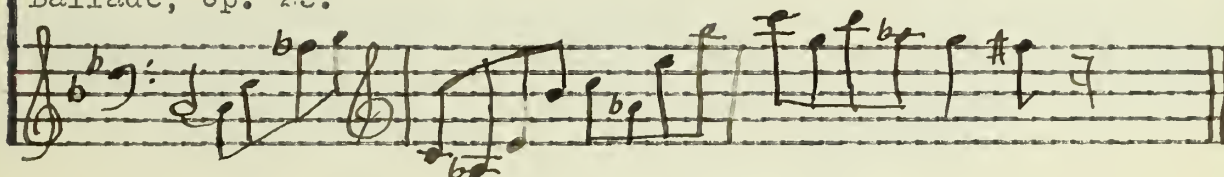
Chopin wrote solo melodies which are suggestive of emotion, and almost self expressive, so to speak; but they can only be inadequately rendered on the pianoforte although the interpretation be masterly; for example:



Etude, op. 25, No.7



Ballade, op. 23.

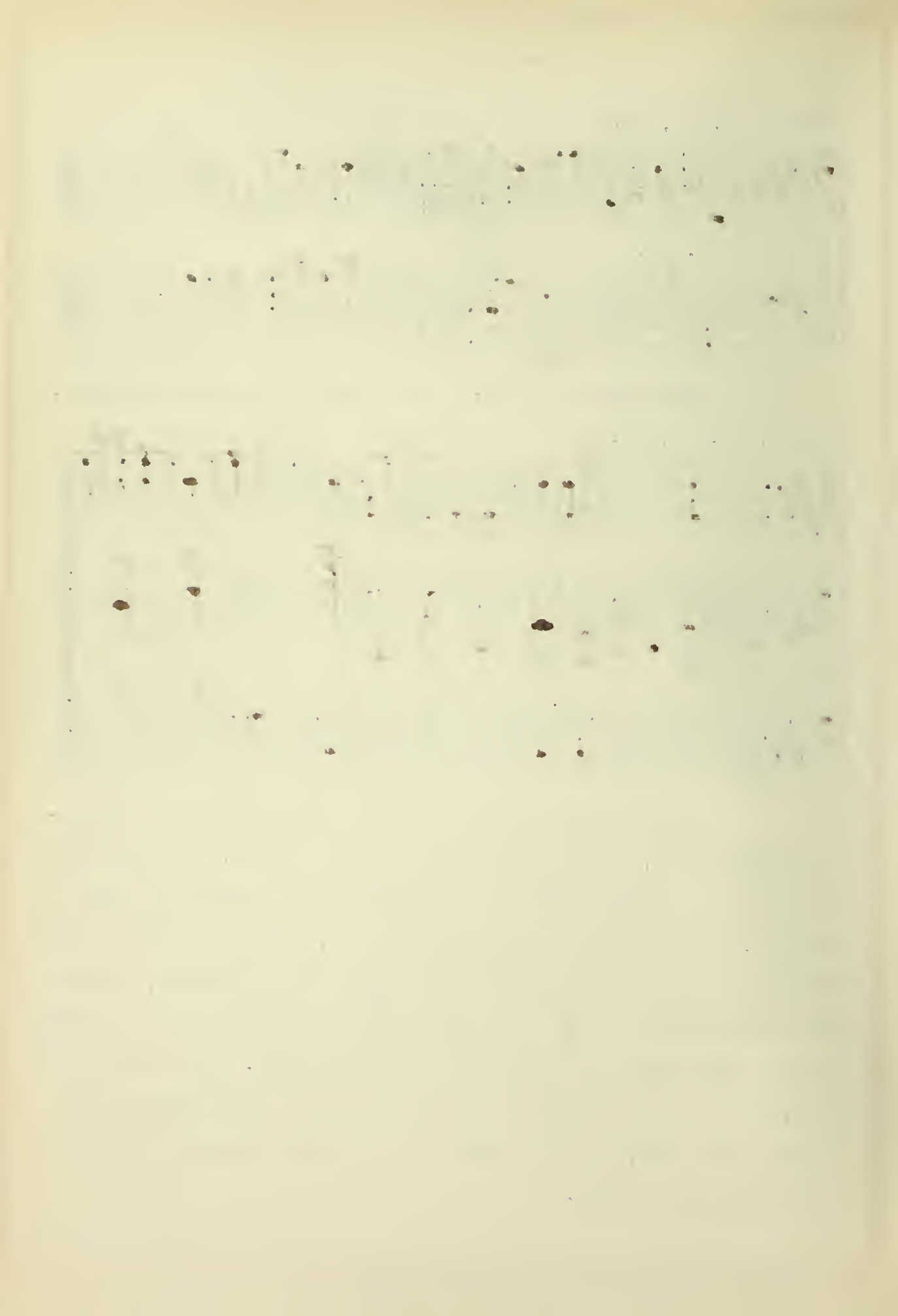


This type of bass-melody is very frequent in Chopin.

Etude, op. 10, No.5

Handwritten musical notation for Etude, op. 10, No. 5. The notation is on three staves. The top staff is in treble clef, the middle staff is in bass clef, and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The key signature is one flat (Bb) and the time signature is 3/4. The top staff contains a complex melody with many beamed sixteenth notes. The middle and bottom staves contain a bass melody with eighth and sixteenth notes. The word "Bass Melody" is written in the middle of the first measure of the bottom staff.

Franz Liszt (1811 - 1886) is famous for his "Hungarian Rhapsodies", built upon Hungarian folk dances. He marks the beginning of complex left hand technique, his "Hungarian Rhapsody No. 12" the melody starts in the bass, next is a cadenza in the left hand, also some chromatic passages, and trills, arpeggios and melody in octaves in the left hand, while the right hand plays a tremolando and numerable scale passages. His "Etude de Concert" is just as elaborate in right hand as the Rhapsody is in the left hand, the left hand is very simple except for the very elaborate ending.

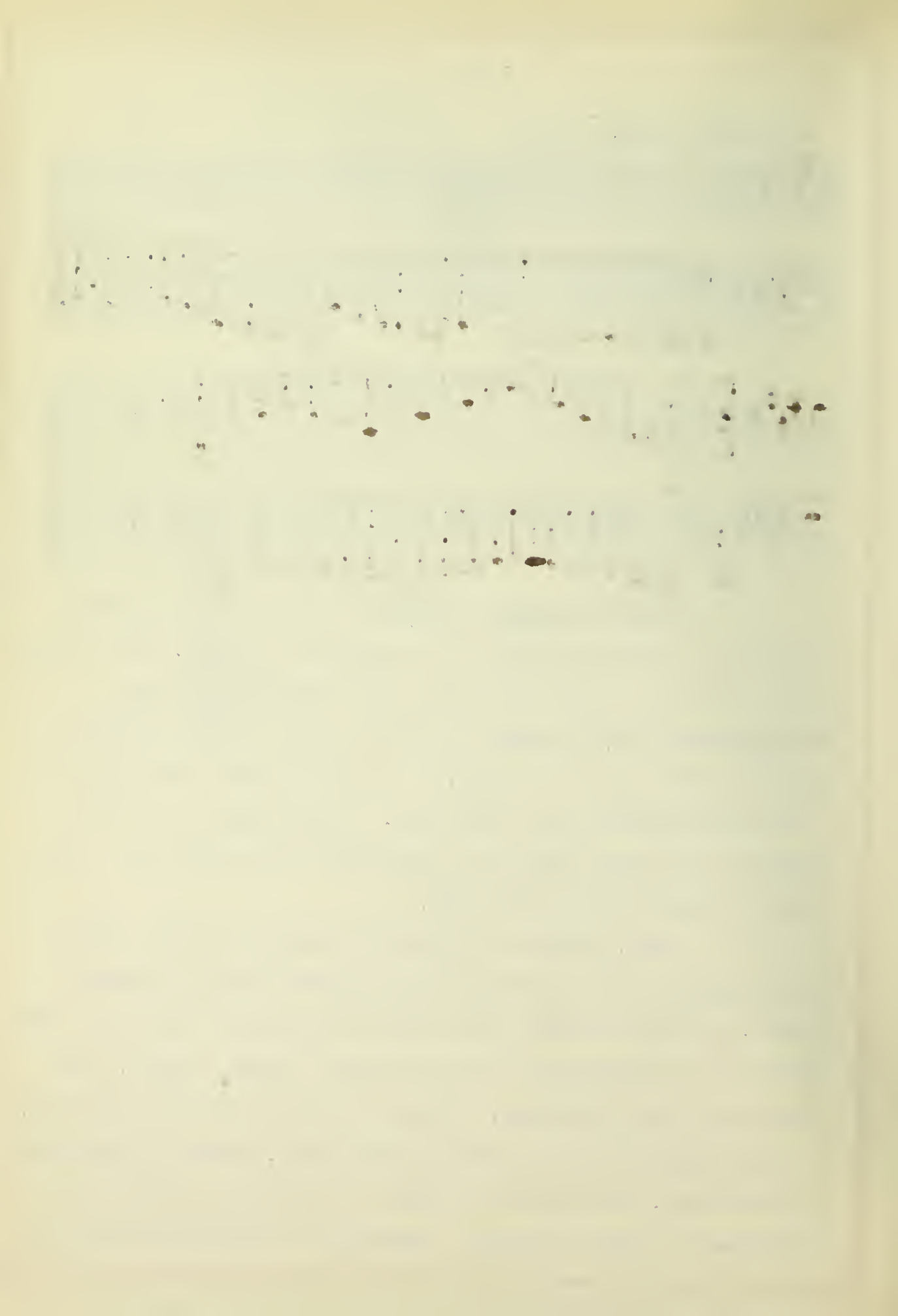


Hungarian Rhapsody No.12



Johannes Brahms (1833-1897) stands as the foremost composer of absolute music in the nineteenth century. One of our modern critics in comparing Brahms with Tschaikowsky said: "Tschaikowsky's music sounds better than it is, while Brahms' music is better than it sounds." His Waltzes are very simple in the accompaniment in the left hand. Brahms makes use of the tremulo in the left hand in his Hungarian Dance, also has a variety of rhythm in the left hand.

Next, we come to the Modern School of Music, with the exception of the greatest modern german master, Johannes Brahms, and his followers, all modern instrumental music has been founded on two principles of the Romantic school, namely, program music and nationalism. Beginning with the modern composers, we find they have taken liberties with tempo, rhythm, modulations and technique. The composer seeks to express feelings or moods, regardless of laws of harmony - Strauss, for instance, makes his

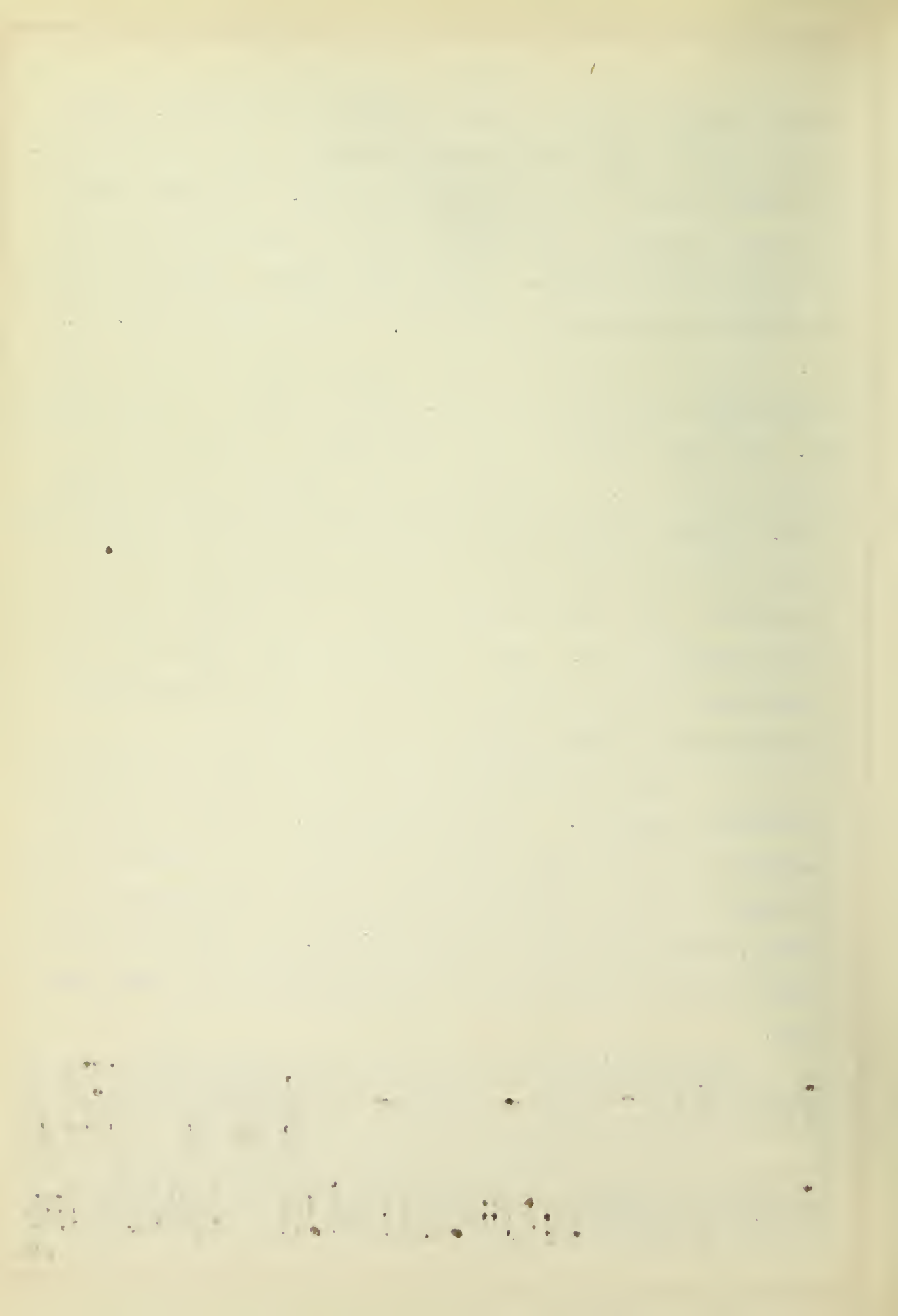


music horrible if what he seeks to express is horrible. Cyril Scott doesn't complete his thoughts in music, they are just jotted down, as one jots down memorandum notes. The modern composers are a legitimate growth out of the art technique of the acknowledged great matters. In the first Russian Schools of Music we have Anton Rubinstein (1830-1894) In his "Romance, op. 44, No.1" he uses triplets in the bass against eighth notes in the right hand, also much modulation. In his "Toreador et Andalouse" op. 103, No.2, he starts in the left hand, as so many of the modern writers do. His rhythm is very complex in this composition. All the modern composers have developed the left hand technique more than their predecessors, they seem to be surer of themselves, take more liberties, giving the left hand as much to do as the right hand. Now the left hand is not merely for accompaniment but also stands out alone, and the performer must have as good left hand technique as right hand.

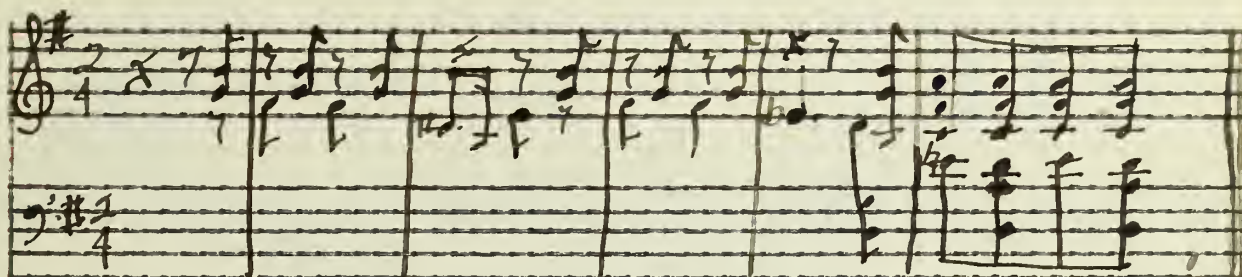
Peter Tschaikowsky (1840-1893) is another great modern Russian composer. In his "Romance, op.5" he has a plaintive melody, in the left hand with the right hand as a counter-melody. His music is very nationalistic and has many odd resolutions of chords, many modulations in the left hand. The left hand has a very beautiful accompaniment, not very difficult but very important.

Romance, op.5





His "Humoresque", op. 10, No.2 is very beautiful, due to the left hand. The melody is carried in the left hand in the first nine measures, and then the left hand has a peculiar technique, and very peculiar chord formations and resolutions which suggest sadness.



Tschaikowsky, op. 19, Vol. XI, alla Schumann



Modern composers even play tricks with rhythm, as illustrated by op.19. The notation $\frac{3}{4}$ time is, of course, absurd, since the measure contains only two quarter beats. This is by no means an engraver's fault, or an oversight of the proof reader. It must be taken as illustrating Tschaikowsky's sarcasm upon similar occasions, almost as absurd, and occurring in Schumann's works; hence, the heading of the variation, "alla Schumann." Note the fullness of bass chords, the same rhythm in the bass as in the right hand.

Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873 -) is another Russian composer who has developed left hand technique to a very great extent. His "Prelude in C# minor" is well known because of the

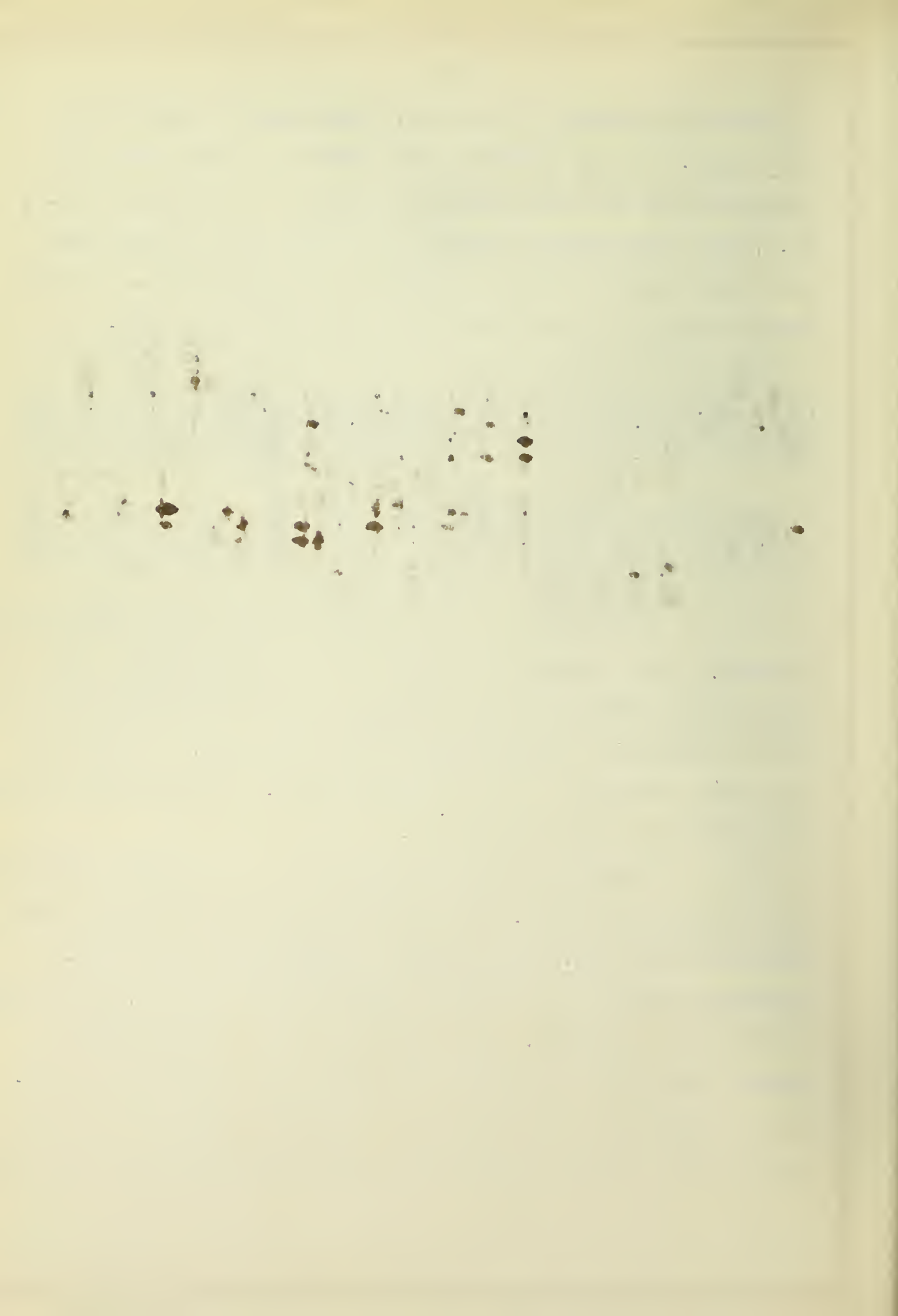
richness and fullness of the bass. The melody is parallel in both hands. He has wonderful rich octaves in both hands, also triplets which are played with both hands. His "Serenade" op.2, No.5, has a sad oppressed melody in the left hand and then some very "Russianistic" chord progressions and resolutions. In the Tempo di Valse, the left hand gives the effect of a harp.

Prelude in C# minor

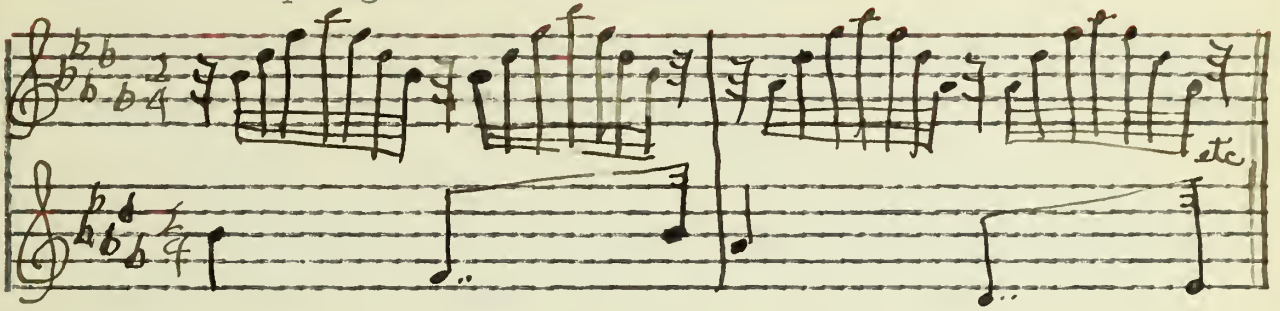


In Scandinavian Music we have Edward Grieg (1843-1907) of Norway, who reflects the national flavor of Norwegian folk song. In his "Wedding day at Troldhøgen" he uses syncopation in the left hand, complex rhythm in the left hand. He does not use such a fixed bass as his contemporaries. He sometimes writes his left hand in the treble clef.

Christian Sinding, Norway (1856 -) has also written much Scandinavian Music. He has done a great deal towards developing the left hand. His "Rustle of Spring" has the melody, sometimes written on the treble clef, in the left hand, while the right hand accompanies. He also uses groups of five sixteenth notes in the left hand against a quarter note in the right hand. He uses arpeggios, scale passage, chromatic passages. The left hand is the principle one in this composition, instead of the right



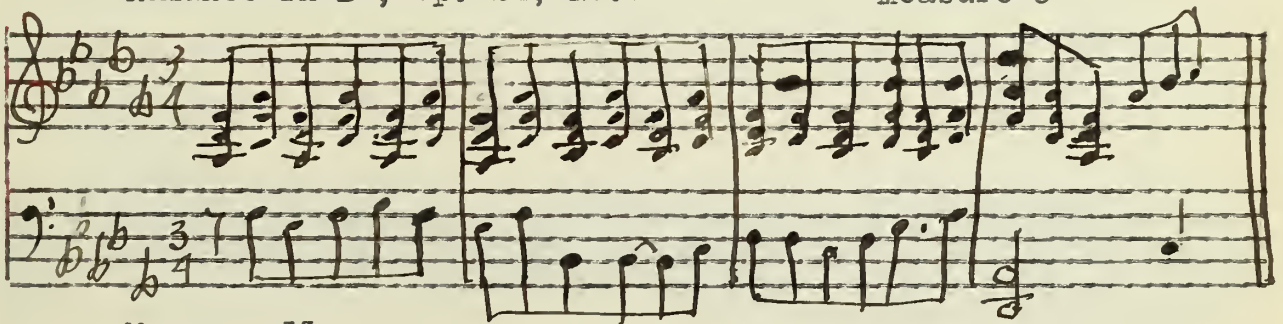
"Rustle of Spring"



Jean Sibelius, Finland (1865 -) has written a very modern composition, "Romance in D^b". It begins with a staccato accompaniment in the right hand for two measures, then the melody very marcato, in the left hand. He uses parallel passages, syncopation in the left hand. Then, beginning at measure 33, he has the melody in the left hand with a counter-melody in the right. Towards the end of the composition beginning measure 55, he has a rich deep octave in the bass as an organ point, and the melody in both bass and right hand.

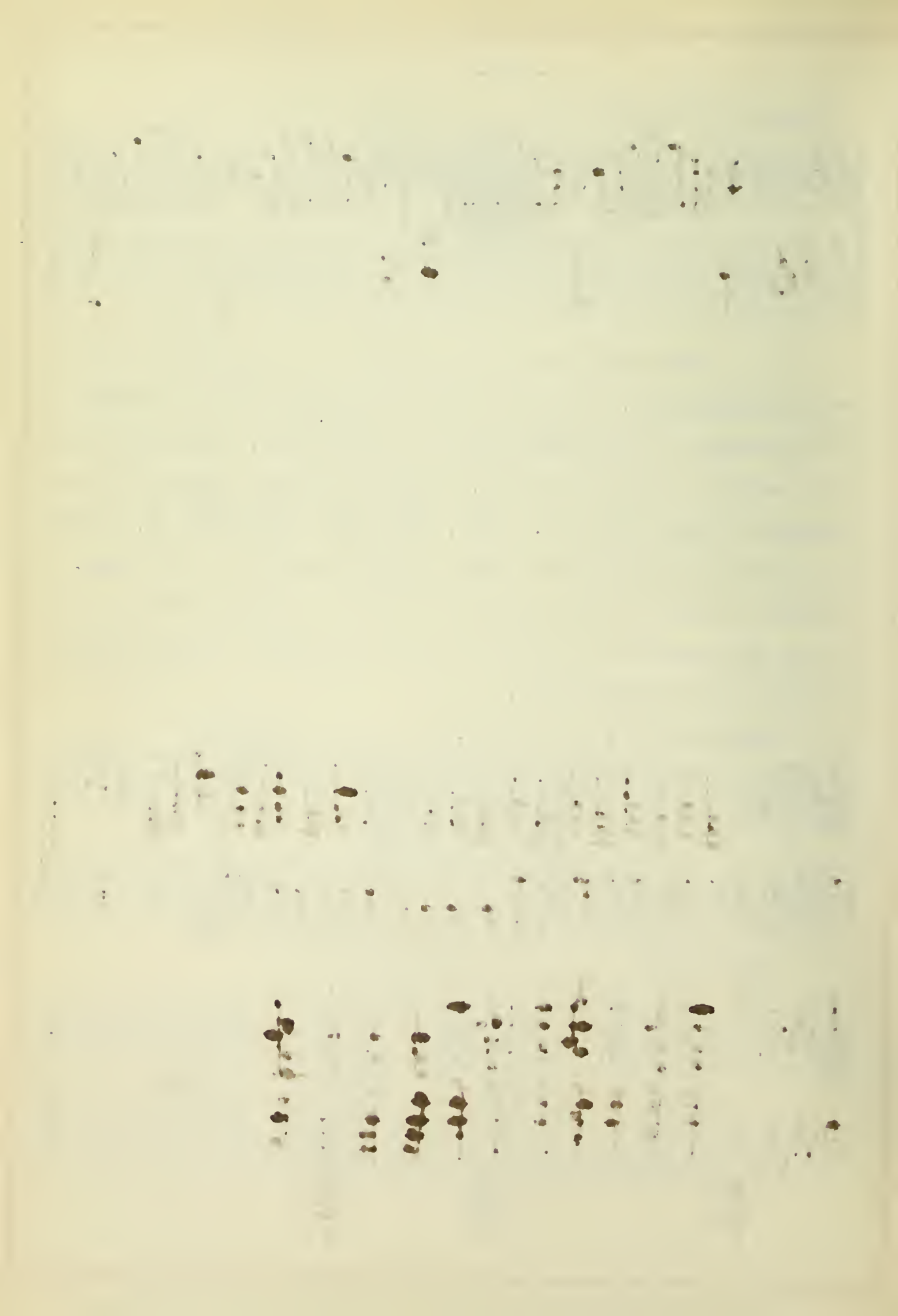
Romance in D^b, op. 24, No.9

Measure 3

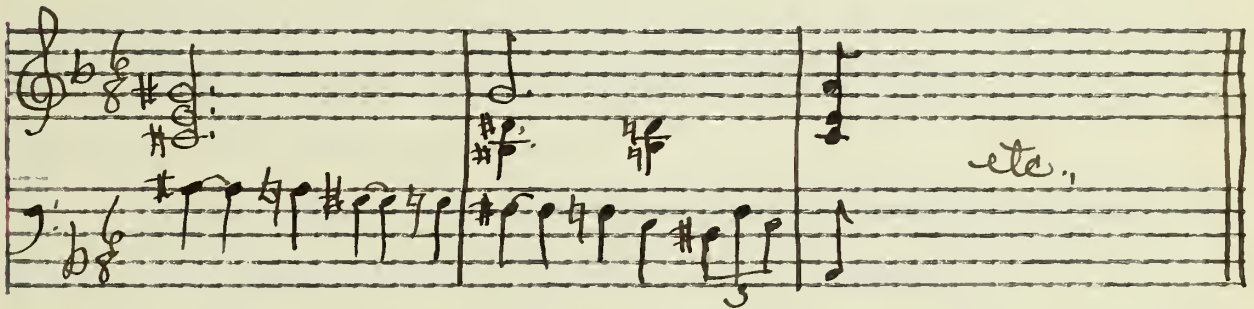


Measure 55





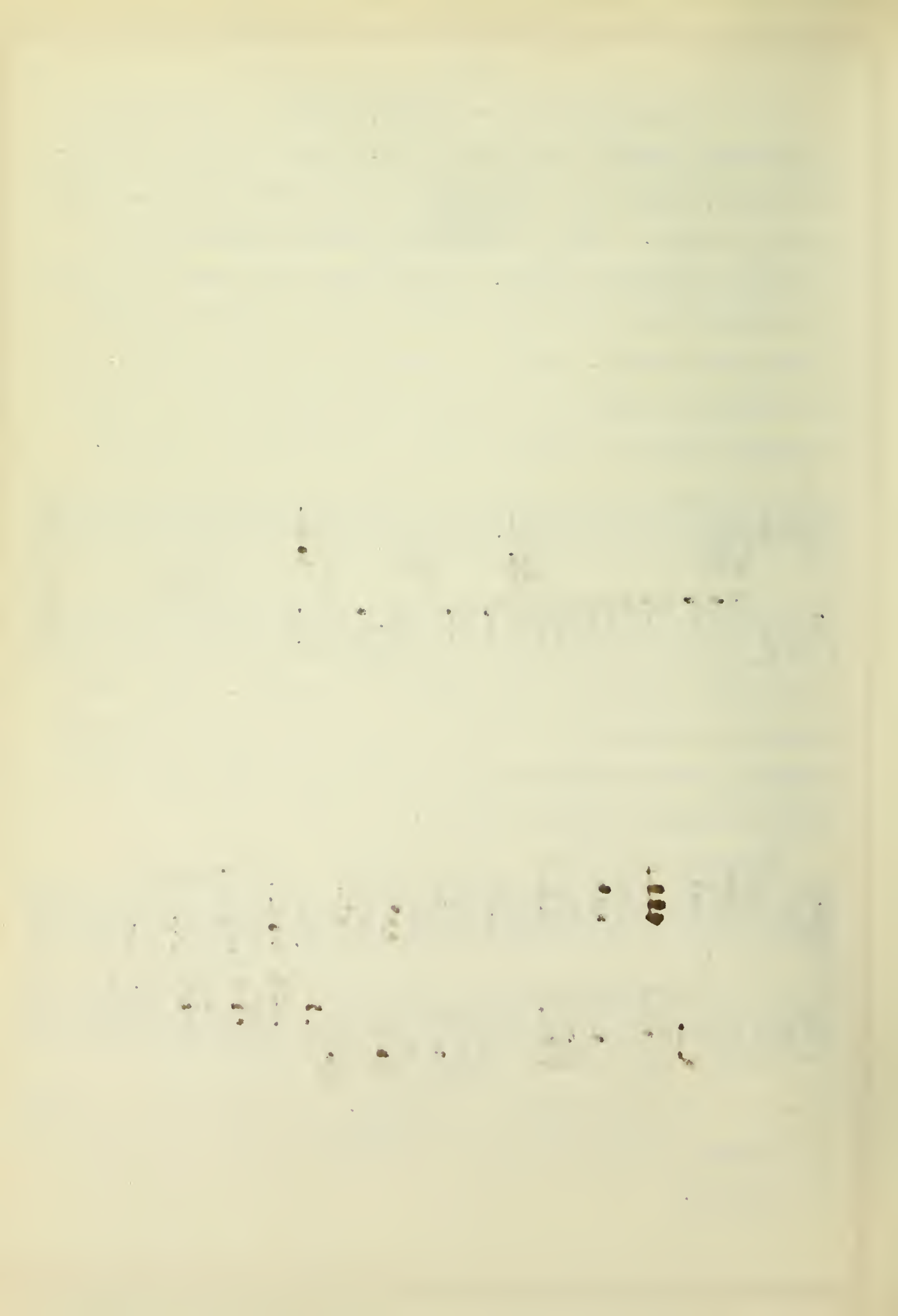
Richard Strauss - Germany, (1864 -) is the most spectacular genius of the present day. He has carried descriptive music, both in the instrumental and operatic school, to the limit of sanity. There is seemingly nothing impossible for Strauss to attempt in music. In his great tone poems he not only reflects moods and poetic thoughts, but is capable of portraying every event, thought or feeling, in tonal coloring. If the subject is repulsive or hideous as is his music; if it be religious, poetic or sublime, this is reflected in his work.



A horizontal listenning will explain the example. This view of harmony is responsible for many of the newer and most beautiful chords in modern technique, for most of these found their way first by means of "passing chords."



Here we have grewsome rushes of fifths. The two planes of fifths are brought too close together for the principles of Polytony to be admitted.



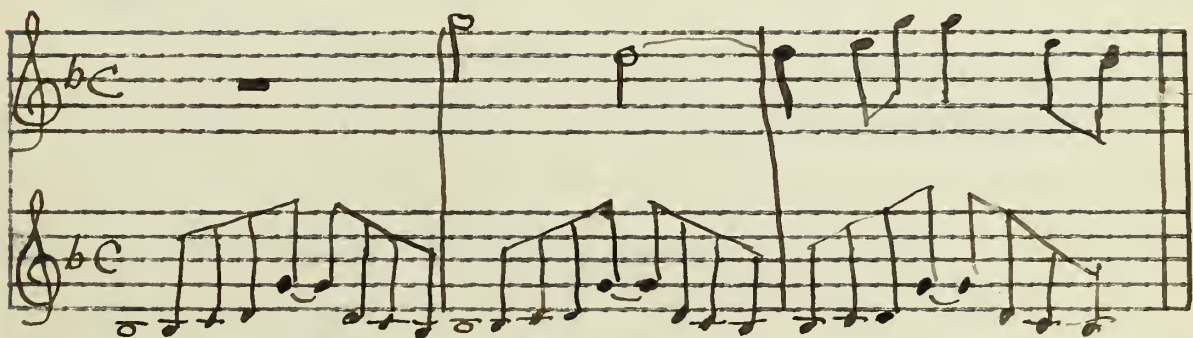
"Also Sprach Zarathustra", op.30



In this example the firm and determined progress of the melody in itself would atone for the free progress of the bass, but the passage is also sequential; or the bass may be accounted for, as an appearance of the ninth together with the root, a frequent practice with modern composers.

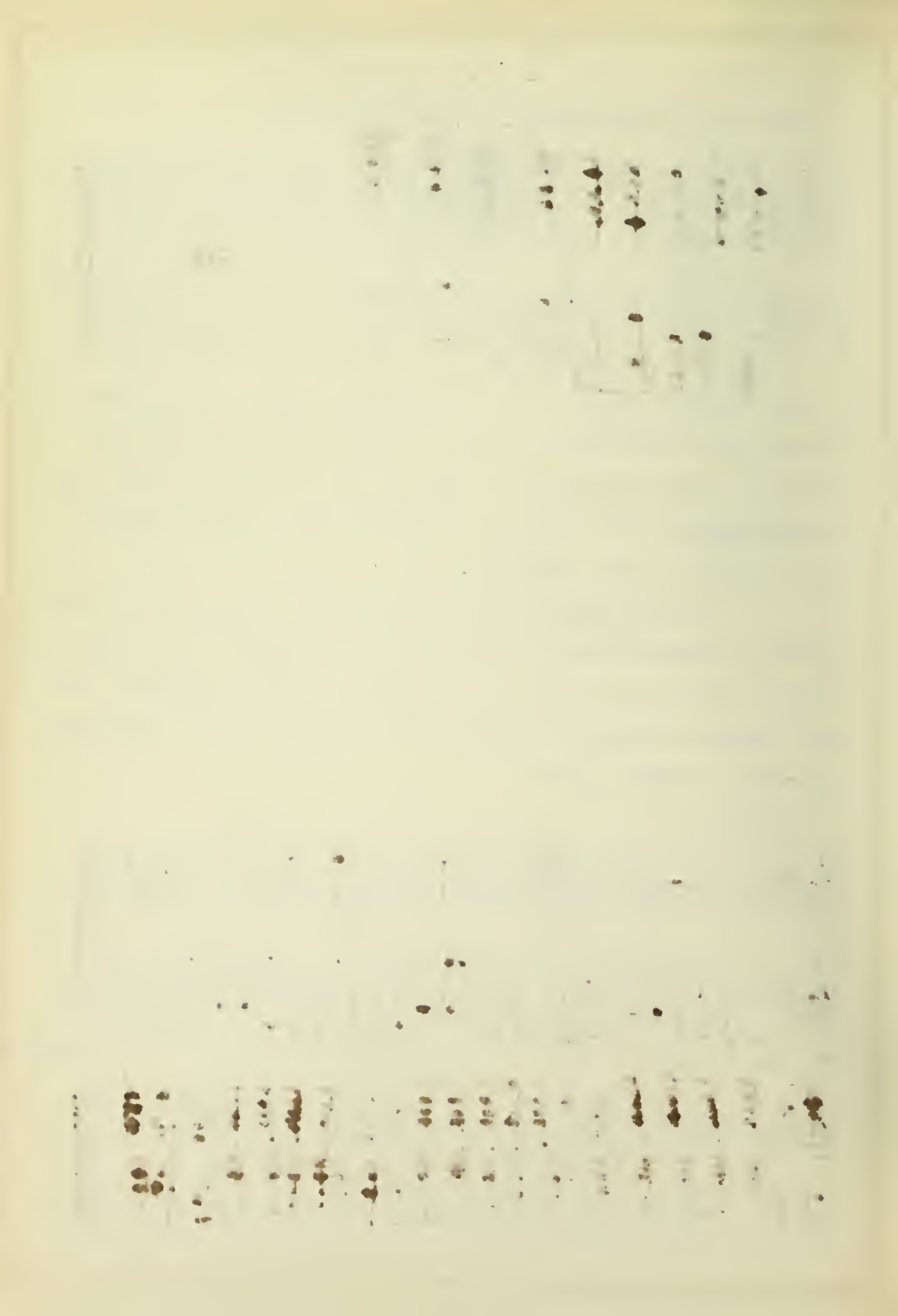
Claude Debussy (1862 - 1913) is a modern French composer, an impressionist in tone. He has returned to the old Greek science of the tonal relationships of the tetrachord. In his "Reverie" we have a combination of modern melody, rhythm and selection of over tones.

"Reverie"



The Impressionist use of a "tonal" chord will be seen in the following.





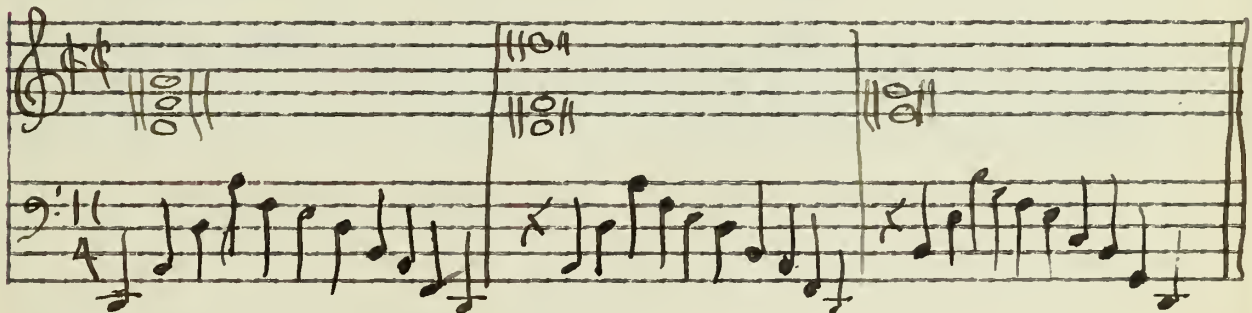
Some curious results of the "reflection" idea may be seen in the following scales and chords in the Debussy extract, where the composer "minors" the sharps in the right hand by the flats in the left, of course this effect is optical and not aural.

"Images" No.1



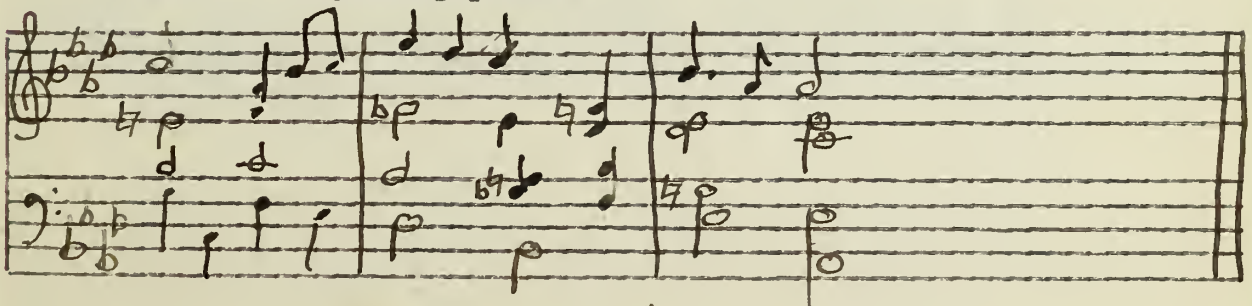
Saint-Saens has written a composition in eleven - four rhythm, called "Priere." op. 7, No.3

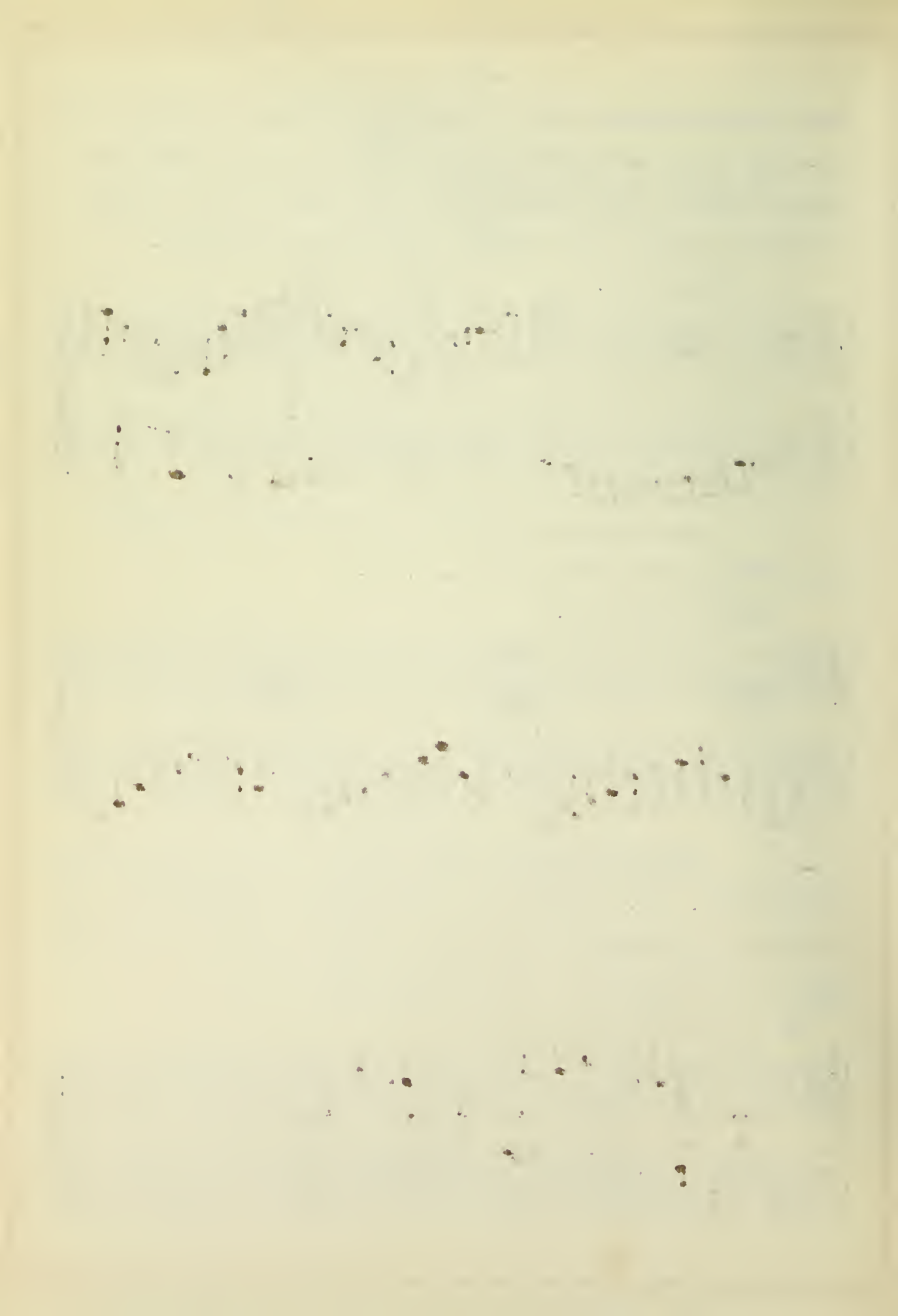
"Priere" op.7, No.3



Edward MacDowell (1861 - 1908) is the greatest American composer. Mr. MacDowell is a tone-poet, a Romanticist. In his "At an old trysting place" from "Woodland Sketches," he has made use of consecutive fifths in the bass.

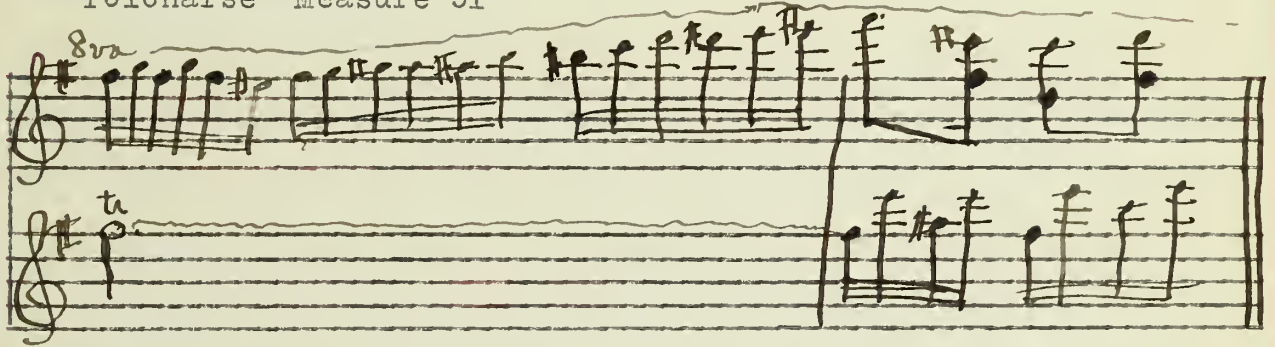
"At and old trysting place"



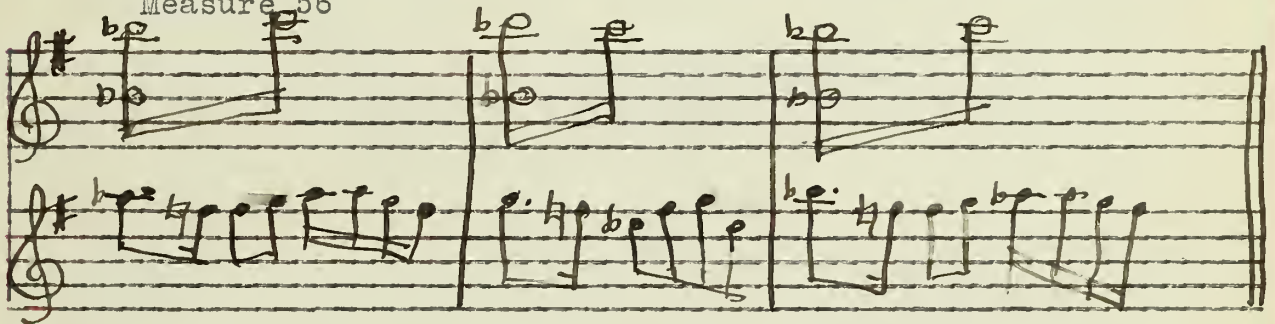


In his "Polonaise" he has the melody played with both hands. He introduces chromatic passages in left hand trills. He does not leave his left hand stationary, but crosses hand in many of his compositions, as illustrated by following example:

"Polonaise" Measure 51



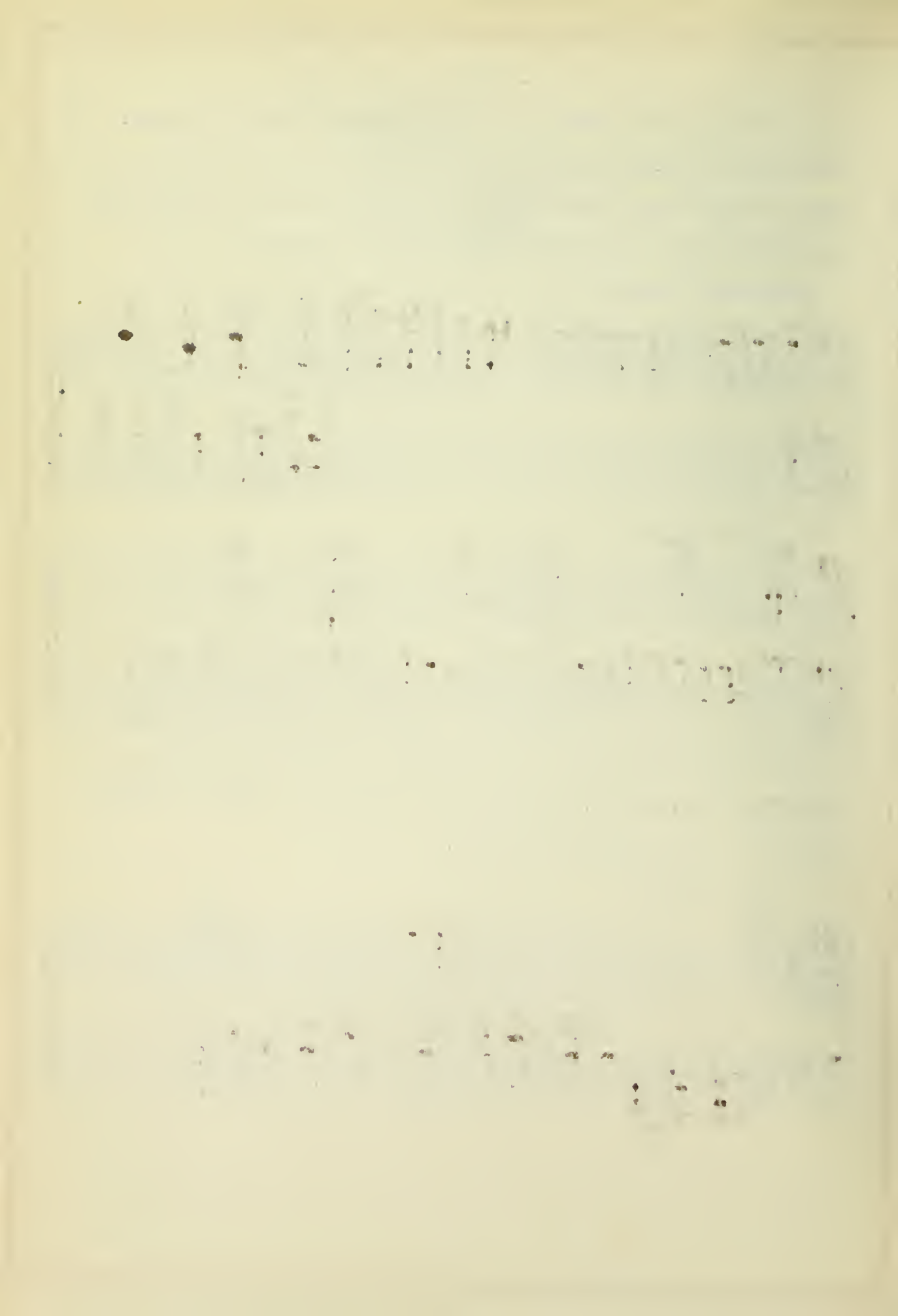
Measure 56



In his "Scotch Poem" his basses give the effect of a harp. In "At Sunset" op.28, No.5 he has the left hand carry the melody while the right hand has a trill.

"At Sunset"





We find the classicists adhered strictly to form, while the Romanticists had more freedom of form, more varied rhythms. The modern composers have broken almost entirely away from form, and have sought to express their moods, thoughts, and impressions. They have written mostly programme music for the pianoforte, and have given the left hand as much freedom as the right. It is allowed to play at any register from the highest to the lowest tones. It crosses with the right and plays the melody; it is given the melody very often, and has been developed and almost perfected. It is no longer for accompaniment, but for melody, technique, and harmony.

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